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RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 9892  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 2349  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 3371  
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 0871  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 0447  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3286  
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RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 000696

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [KN](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPAN WELCOMES SIX-PARTY AGREEMENT, REMAINS UNEASY  
ABOUT ABDUCTION ISSUE

REF: STATE 18387

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4 (b)(d).

11. (C) Summary. Japanese reaction to the Six-Party Talks (6PT) agreement is mixed. Popular reaction to the 6PT agreement is shaped by the strong and passionate view the Japanese public has on the abduction issue. PM Abe, who holds deep personal views on the abductions, shares the public view that progress in 6PT issues must include concrete moves to resolve the abduction issue. However, some members of Abe,s own LDP, as well as members of the opposition, are arguing that Japan,s security requires resolution of the nuclear issue and that the abduction issue should not be a roadblock. The President,s call to Prime Minister Abe has had a very positive effect, with a senior MOFA official describing it as &the right message at the right time.8  
End summary.

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Hard-Line vs. Pragmatic Reaction  
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12. (C) Japan,s reaction to the February 13 Six Party Talks agreement has been characterized by a mixture of pragmatic realism and disappointment. Politicians, bureaucrats, academics, journalists, and the public generally expressed relief at the prospect of ending North Korea's nuclear aspirations, combined with varying degrees of anxiety and pessimism about the way the abduction issue was handled in the Beijing accord.

13. (C) Publicly, advisors and policymakers close to Prime Minister Abe, such as LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa, continue to take a hard line against North Korea, stressing the importance of the abduction issue. Nakagawa told a February 15 LDP gathering that "(North Korea) is dishonest and a liar. We don't have to change our position." On February 15, FM Aso,s Policy Secretary Ichiro Muramatsu, who is a Diet staffer, not a Foreign Ministry official, confirmed that hard-line view to embassy officers, warning, "the ball is in the DPRK court . . . The Japanese public will never view the abduction issue as resolved until the fate of Megumi Yokota is fully clarified."

14. (C) Several mid-level LDP officials, including LDP Asia Diplomacy and Security Vision Research Council chairman Koichi Kato and former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, openly opposed the PM's decision to prioritize the abduction issue over DPRK denuclearization. They were joined by leading DPJ official Seiji Maehara who, during a face-to-face confrontation during a budget committee hearing on February 14, accused PM Abe of being "excessively caught up on the abduction issue" to the detriment of Japan's national security. The majority of mid-level MOFA bureaucrats, academics, and political observers with whom we have spoken believe the Six Party agreement is a good first step, but only a first step.

15. (C) PM Abe, who has made relatively few public statements about the agreement, suggested during the budget committee confrontation with Maehara that Japan might pursue a pragmatic, two-track approach to the denuclearization and abduction issues. Abe refused to back down from his stance on abductions, but noted that "the nuclear issue is a matter of extremely serious concern to us from the perspective of our national security, and we really think it necessary to have North Korea take concrete action to give up its nuclear program. Things are going on in a framework with Japan providing no fuel oil, and this is not against the national interests of Japan. We must have North Korea become aware of how important it is to resolve the abduction issue. The moment they think it's all right that the issue is not settled, this issue will freeze."

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Unease Persists  
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16. (C) Despite the generally positive assessment of the agreement as a major first step toward resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, a strong undercurrent of unease about Washington's true intentions persists. LDP Upper House member Yutaka Kobayashi stated it most bluntly, suggesting that the U.S. "again passed Japan" and cut a deal with the DPRK. Several interlocutors, including Komeito representative Isamu Ueda, expressed concern about Japan's ability to move forward on the abduction issue now that it has been largely separated from the nuclear issue in the Japan-DPRK working group. Many Japanese, in and out of government, feel insecure about the U.S. intentions and fear that the U.S. will remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism before the abduction issue has been resolved.

17. (C) Teruaki Masumoto, brother of an abductee and Secretary General of the Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN), expressed concern about "the real U.S. intention" about removing the DPRK from the terrorism list. He said, however, that AFVKN members recall President Bush's meeting with Megumi Yokota and believe that the recent Bush-Abe telephone call confirms that the U.S. and Japan will continue to cooperate on the abduction issue. (Note: Masumoto's group has requested to see Vice President Cheney when he visits Japan, February 20-22.) Leading DPRK specialist Prof. Hajime Izumi argued that U.S.-DPRK discussions aiming to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism would, in fact, help facilitate resolution of Japan's abduction issue, since removal of the &terrorist state8 designation requires resolution of that issue.

18. (C) The abduction issue is not simply &another political issue8 in Japan. There is a deep popular revulsion about the abductions. Popular reaction to the Beijing agreement is largely colored by strong feeling that the abductions were a criminal affront to human rights and an attack on Japan. Abe and other politicians, including LDP PARC Chairman Shoichi

Nakagawa, by making the abduction issue priority number one, are reflecting this strongly held popular view.

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Impact on Domestic Elections  
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¶9. (C) Opinions vary on whether the Six-Party agreement will become an issue in the upcoming April unified local elections and the July Upper House elections. Much will depend on what progress is made on the abduction issue in the coming weeks. Having made resolution of the abduction issue a focus of his administration, Abe and the LDP are vulnerable if progress is not forthcoming. Osaka Prefecture DPJ Vice Secretary General Yoshimura reflected that view when he said "the result of the bilateral talks between Japan and North Korea in the working group will affect this year's elections. DPJ leaders will be carefully watching how the talks proceed."

¶10. (C) If the working group talks fail to make progress, LDP member Yutaka Kobayashi suggested that Abe might have a ready scapegoat for his difficulties - MOFA. Kobayashi voiced the view that "There are voices within the LDP that Japan was deceived by the U.S., especially among those distant from the current government leadership. They argue that after all, because of Japan's (MOFA) diplomacy, the U.S. again "passed Japan" and made all the deals with the DPRK."

¶11. (C) Keio University professor Masao Okonogi reminded us that Abe will need to steer a course mindful of public opinion and his plunging poll numbers. Okonogi opined that, with Upper House elections taking place in July, Abe will need, for the time being, to balance a policy of international cooperation with one of pursuing an abduction

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issue that is supported by Japanese voters - all without drawing public backlash.

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Comment  
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¶12. (C) We believe PM Abe will pursue the pragmatic approach he suggested in the Diet. The government will exert its best efforts to make progress on the abduction issue, while refusing to allow the abduction issue to impede the broader goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Successfully pursuing this balanced approach will require skillful diplomacy and close U.S.-Japan cooperation. In a February 16 meeting with the Ambassador, MOFA Director General for North American Affairs Shunichi Nishimiya described the President's remarks to Prime Minister Abe as "the right message at the right time." In television interviews and meetings with Japanese officials, the Ambassador has been stressing that getting a working group established on Japanese-DPRK issues as part of the Six-Party process showed movement on the abduction issue. Before the latest agreement, nothing had happened. Generally, this argument is getting a good response.

SCHIEFFER